

Testimony in Support of HB 1141
House Transportation Committee – January 12, 2023
Joshua Edwards, Nationally Registered Paramedic

Good morning, Chairman Ruby, Representative Christensen and members of this committee.

My name is Joshua Edwards. I am a resident of District 24 and work as a Paramedic for Killdeer Area Ambulance, a rural ambulance taxing district located in Dunn County within District 26.

I speak today at the urging of my fellow members of Killdeer Area Ambulance Service in support of House Bill 1141.

The CDC, NIOSH, NTSA and EMS, police and fire agencies have compiled and published studies, white papers and reports full of statistics regarding vehicle related pedestrian injuries and deaths. The Emergency Responder Safety Institute has created a website *ReportStruckBy.com* to catalog these incidents because they are becoming so frequent. I hate to say it, but I was always bored by statistics. They didn't really mean anything because they were just numbers and percentages used to support an opinion. My view of statistics changed on December 4, 2021 when I became a statistic. At mile marker 98 on ND Highway 22, I was struck by a pickup truck while I was giving care to a critically injured victim of a vehicle rollover.

In EMS we train on scene safety constantly. It is our first consideration on every ambulance call and I am well aware how much my safety and that of my patient is my responsibility. Scene safety was a hot topic at Killdeer Ambulance during that first week of December 2021. On December 1, a local resident and strong supporter of the ambulance service stopped to help another driver change a flat tire. Near mile marker 110 on ND Highway 22, she pulled her vehicle safely to the side of the road and crossed the highway to assist the driver of the safely parked disabled vehicle. She was struck by a vehicle attempting to pass the disabled vehicle and was killed instantly.

On December 4, safety was utmost in my mind when I exited my unit and I had done everything right. The three ambulances were parked on scene with emergency lights flashing. The Fire Chief, emergency lights engaged, parked his vehicle to protect the scene.



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Deputies were parked with emergency lights flashing and were directing traffic around the crash appropriately. With complete disregard for safety or the lives he was risking, the driver of a pickup truck placed his convenience at greater value than the lives of my patient, my crews, the Deputies and myself. Driving at a high rate of speed, he entered the oncoming lane, passing four parked emergency vehicles with lights flashing and changed lanes, hitting the open compartment door of the ambulance I was entering and striking me on the right side of my body.

You won't see any injuries looking at me today. With medical treatment, I was able to return to my work as a Paramedic. I will continue to have physical effects of the trauma I sustained throughout my life. You won't see the psychological and emotional effects both incidents caused to myself, my family and my coworkers. You also won't see the expense inflicted on the Killdeer community (supported by taxpayer dollars) through medical bills, overtime expense, replacement of damaged equipment, increased WSI rates, insurance claims, safety training and mental health services.

I understand that speeding and driving recklessly are personal decisions and behavior cannot be legislated.

I believe that laws and penalties for breaking these laws lead to a functional and safe society.

I believe that our current "Slow Down, Move Over" statute does not clearly state expectations and should include personal vehicles and penalties.

I and the EMS providers that I represent today urge a "Do Pass" recommendation on House Bill 1141. Please, do all you can to protect the emergency responders as well as your constituents that use the highways of the State of North Dakota.

Thank you for your service to those who serve, protect and live in our state and for your time and consideration of House Bill 1141.

